



THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION: research commissioning framework

The CA recognises that research can be an important tool in identifying priorities for the development of our campaigning and influencing role, particularly in relation to classics education. Costs associated with research work are not normally eligible for funding under our Grants Scheme, so without in-house research capacity, commissioning research is one way that we can obtain knowledge or evidence needed to inform our work.

This framework is intended to support best practice in reaching decisions to commission research and in managing the commissioning process. Where a potential need to identify knowledge or evidence to inform our work arises, Officers should have regard to this framework in reaching a preliminary view on the merits of commissioning research, before making recommendations to Council for budget approval.

In reaching a preliminary view, it is open to Officers to seek advice or other inputs from relevant experts as required. Any recommendations to Council to commission research should set out broadly how considerations set out below have been applied.

Questions to consider before embarking on a commissioning process:

Is the research necessary? A decision to commission research should be based on a clear and identified need. This involves confirming that the research will result in the creation of new knowledge and clarifying how it might help us further the CA's aims.

How do we intend to use the research findings? How might they support our work and above all, what do we hope to achieve as a result? By addressing these questions carefully before we commit funding, we will avoid funding research which, however interesting its findings, is put on a shelf to gather dust.

Any recommendation to commit funding should be accompanied by an outline plan for using the research to influence change. This should cover factors including who we seek to influence, such as exam boards or Ofqual and the Department for Education, and how we will source required knowledge and capacity for lobbying or other activity, as appropriate.

Are we choosing the commissioning route for the right reasons? This might concern a need for the research to be conducted by an external research provider for reasons of independence and objectivity. The commissioning process can be resource intensive, depending on the type of process chosen and the need to manage the project. We will appoint a named Council member to oversee the project from start to finish.

Underpinning independence and objectivity:

We recognise that as a learned society, many of the leaders of our organisation are experts in their field and therefore potential bidders for research commissions. Other than in exceptional cases, our Trustees, appointed or co-opted members of our Boards, committees or working groups, or members of partner organisations, may bid for any research commissions we fund. However, in the case of bids from such individuals or organisations we will particularly consider questions of independence and objectivity. Where we decide to fund one of our Trustees to carry out research on our behalf, we will alert them to their obligation to declare this as a third party related transaction in our annual published accounts.

RESEARCH QUESTION	
What do we want to find out?	We will aim to answer these questions at the scoping stage, designed to establish the aims and purposes of the research. This will include finding out what research has already been done on the issue by informal enquiries within our networks, to check that our research will generate new or improved knowledge and is not duplicating work done elsewhere.
OBJECTIVES	
What will we do with it?	
OUTCOMES	
What changes do we want to happen as a result?	

STAGE 1: scoping

When scoping we will consider who are likely to be the key stakeholders for the research, including research participants, research providers, individuals or organisations who might have a shared interest in the findings, and our target audience(s) of individuals or organisations we intend to read and respond to the research findings. If we identify other organisations who share an interest in the research findings, we will consider whether we might want to collaborate with them. This could be an effective way of pooling expertise and resources, as well as potentially increasing the impact of the research.

We may document a scoping overview for discussion with potential researchers, setting out broad aims, objectives and intended outcomes or changes we hope may result from the research and our use of it.

STAGE 2: deciding the commissioning process

There are a variety of ways to commission research. We will use whichever is most proportionate.

COMMISSIONING PROCESS		
Direct appointment	By invitation	Open competition

STAGE 3: selecting and appointing the research provider

Where we decide to invite a shortlist of known researchers to apply, or to run an open tender process, we will develop clear criteria against which to assess each bid. We may decide to take up references before formally appointing a research provider and/or seek an assessment from an expert reviewer.

STAGE 4: agreeing the research brief

We will work collaboratively with our appointed researcher to agree a detailed research brief which builds on our scoping overview. This will aim to document the following, as appropriate to the project:

- ✓ outputs – what we will produce e.g. report, video, toolkit etc.;
- ✓ methods – approaches and guiding principles;
- ✓ research participants – who will take part in the research, how many participants are required and how they will be selected;
- ✓ timescales – duration and timing of activities, including milestones;
- ✓ budget – total budget, with breakdown of costs by activity;
- ✓ research ethics – any ethical issues raised by the research and how we will address them.

We will draw up a written agreement with the selected provider, establishing expectations on both sides in terms of delivery, timescales, intellectual property and data protection issues, and payment terms.

STAGE 5: managing the project

The nominated Council member commissioning lead will oversee the project, liaise with the researcher throughout, review draft reports where applicable and report as appropriate to Council. They may set up a small working group of Council members to support them as appropriate and proportionate case by case.